

INFO	LOG-00	AF-00	AID-00	A-00	CIAE-00	CPR-00	INL-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DS-00	DHSE-00	OIGO-00	VCI-00	OBO-00
	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	MOFM-00
	MOF-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00
	PA-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00	ISNE-00	DOHS-00
	FMPC-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	NCTC-00
	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00
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 FM AMCONSUL TIJUANA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9167
 DHS IP BOMBING PREVENTION WASH DC
 FBI WASHINGTON DC
 INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
 AMEMBASSY MEXICO
 AMCONSUL TIJUANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TIJUANA 000883

E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/11/2019
 TAGS: [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [MX](#)
 SUBJECT: REPORT FROM LA FRONTERA: BORDER PATROL'S BATTLES WITH
 TRAFFICKERS

CLASSIFIED BY: ARADETSKY, Political Officer, Pol/Econ, STATE.
 REASON: 1.4 (d)

11. (U) SUMMARY: Migrant and drug trafficking patterns along the Mexico-U.S. border vary from sector to sector and are difficult to pin down because the routes and tactics used by traffickers are in constant flux. Most traffickers prefer to avoid confrontation with U.S. law enforcement, and the absolute number of attacks against U.S. Border Patrol (BP) agents are down in 2009 compared to 2008. Unfortunately, the nature of the attacks that do occur are increasingly violent, as demonstrated by the July 22 murder of BP Agent Robert Rosas by unknown assailants. This phenomenon may be due to rival drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) competing for dominance in certain corridors, weakened DTOs using more violent tactics, and a breakdown in the alliance between migrant traffickers ("polleros") and bandits. Some sources claim more "polleros" are arming themselves. This cable was jointly drafted by Consulates Ciudad Juarez, Matamoros, Monterrey, Nogales, and Tijuana. END SUMMARY

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL RE-ROUTE

12. (U) Most analysts believe DTOS and "polleros" prefer, when possible, to avoid direct confrontation with U.S. law enforcement and will alter their routes to avoid detection. As a result, BP is playing a constant game of catch-up, trying to keep track of changing trafficking patterns. In the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez corridor, for example, DTOs have shifted to more remote corridors in northwestern Chihuahua due to construction of the border fence and increased patrolling activities near El Paso. Urban border fence expansion and fortification in Nogales, AZ has forced traffic into the mountainous regions to the immediate east and west of town. In the San Diego sector, trafficking has moved east to the desert areas near Tecate, CA as the fence has been built inland from the Pacific Ocean. In the Rio Grande Valley Sector, which encompasses Brownsville and McAllen, TX, BP is noticing trafficking moving westward, though BP analysts cannot yet pinpoint the reason for this shift as the fence has not yet been completed in this area.

13. (C) Despite an overall desire to avoid confrontation, the risk for violence in the trafficking corridors appears to be going up. While overall assaults against BP agents are down in 2009, Maritza Weaver, Supervisor of BP intelligence in the westernmost sector, points out that the nature of the assaults that do occur are becoming more aggressive and the overall statistics of lower assaults mask sharp increases in violence in

certain sectors. For example, traffickers used to throw rocks at BP vehicles to create a distraction, but not with the intention to hurt the agent. Since the end of last year, BP agents report bandits and traffickers are aiming rocks at the agents themselves. Likewise, in the Rio Grande Valley Sector, according to BP Agent Gilberto Perez, historically drug runners would dump their drug loads and run when approached by BP, but now these individuals are fighting to keep their product, including shooting at BP agents, ramming agents or their vehicles with cars, or throwing large rocks at the Rio Grande patrols. A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in Monterrey believes traffickers may be getting more desperate as the wall gets built and, if armed, are more willing to shoot first.

THE STAKES ARE HIGHER THESE DAYS

14. (U) There are several explanations for the increase in violent assaults. First, several trafficking corridors are being disputed by two or more DTOs. In these cases, aggression almost inevitably goes up. DTO "gatekeepers" regulate the drug and migrant flow across the border by controlling smugglers' access to the corridors and collecting "taxes" on illicit shipments. "Polleros" who pay one DTO to gain access are vulnerable to retaliation from the rival DTO. In western Chihuahua, the Vicente Fuentes DTO and the Sinaloa DTO are competing for control of routes. Similarly, in the rural corridor west of Tecate, CA, where, bucking the overall statistics, violence has seriously peaked in recent months, BP believes rival remnants of the Arellano Felix DTO are playing out their turf battles with a predictable uptick in migrant and BP deaths and injuries (NOTE: BP Agent Rosas was killed in this corridor July 22 and two migrants have died due to bullet wounds in the sector so far in 2009, compared to zero migrant deaths in the corridor in 2008). However, dominance of a particular sector by one cartel does not guarantee peace. In the Rio Grande Valley, the Gulf Cartel remains dominant but weakened by constant pressure from the Mexican military and Mexican Federal Police. BP believes the cartel is responding by threatening its "staff" with death and/or holding their family as collateral if they do not complete their delivery successfully. BP believes this is a major factor in the uptick in violence between traffickers and BP in this sector.

15. (C) Another reason violence is up in the trafficking corridors is a breakdown in the alliance between "polleros" and bandits, who have for years roamed the border preying on migrants. Bandits used to work hand in hand with migrant traffickers. The "polleros" would guide the migrants to a pre-designated spot, the bandits would take money from the migrants, and there was an unwritten rule that the "pollero" and those working for him or her would not be robbed. This was bad news for the migrants, but usually passed off without violence. According to Jose Zoa, who monitors the violent Tecate corridor for BP's Intelligence division, as the Arellano Felix DTO has been pulled apart due to the arrest of much of its leadership, undisciplined "narco-juniors" now see banditry as a second source of income and have decided that "polleros" are also fair targets.

16. (C) Some reports suggest "polleros" are arming themselves to defend against the bandits. In Arizona, both Mexican and U.S. law enforcement report an increased prevalence of detainees being found with arms. BP in El Paso says it has been common for years for "polleros" to arm themselves. However, San Diego BP believes that most "polleros" in their sector are still savvy enough to know they are better off, if caught, not having a weapon on them, so the amount of armed traffickers in each sector probably varies.

17. (U) COMMENT: BP faces many obstacles in combating the violence. While BP does cooperate with Mexican law enforcement through the "Operational Protocols for Border Violence Incidents", the cooperation is irregular. The Mexican responding agency varies depending on the situation, and frequent rotation of personnel (for understandable reasons) mean BP needs to routinely rebuild its relationships. Moreover, BP

believes that many officials at all levels on the Mexican side fear retribution if they cooperate fully. Also, when an incident occurs on the U.S. side, but the assailant is able to flee south back across the border, even when Mexican authorities detain the individual, they are required by Mexican law to release the suspect within forty-eight hours if no charges are filed. The procedures under the "Protocols" are too cumbersome and lengthy for this timeline, and as a result, most incidents go unpunished. On the U.S. side, BP faces manpower limitations and cannot patrol all areas of the border consistently. Unfortunately, as long as parts of Mexico are destabilized by weakened, desperate, and competing DTOs, BP and migrants will continue to face dangerous conditions. END COMMENT

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